



FACT SHEET #7

HOUSEHOLD PETROLEUM LIQUIDS

Why Should I Be Concerned?

The improper use and storage of liquid petroleum products can lead to ground water contamination or fire and explosions. Both outcomes can endanger the environment and your family and negatively affect property values. Remember, gasoline is both flammable and toxic and one of the most dangerous chemicals you will regularly be in contact with during your life.

The purpose of this fact sheet is to help you identify and properly use and dispose of petroleum liquids in your home.

Sources of Household Petroleum Liquids

There are many tools and toys today that contain gasoline and oil. Often, each gasoline-powered tool or vehicle has a separate container that holds stored fuel in the form of gasoline or a gasoline and oil mixture. So the number of threats to your well can be larger than you think. Don't forget the largest "container" of petroleum liquids for most households: a home heating oil tank.

Tools, toys and containers that contain petroleum liquids include:

- 💧 Lawn mowers, lawn tractors
- 💧 Chain saws (even electric ones)
- 💧 Snowmobiles
- 💧 Weed-wackers
- 💧 Motor-boats
- 💧 All-terrain-vehicles (ATVs), automobiles and campers (recreational vehicles, RVs)
- 💧 Kerosene heaters
- 💧 Gas cans containing gasoline (for four-cycle engines)
- 💧 Gas cans containing mixed gasoline and oil (for two-cycle engines)
- 💧 Bottles and jugs containing used crankcase oil
- 💧 Home heating oil tank (often 275 gallons)

A joint water quality project from:



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What Makes Your Well a “High Risk” Candidate for Gasoline Contamination?

If any of the following are found to be present on or near your property, special precautions or corrective actions should be considered:

- 💧 A gasoline spill, even as little as a half gallon, and sometimes noticed only by a grass stain, in the past two years;
- 💧 A vehicle accident within the past two years that might have damaged the vehicle’s gas tank;
- 💧 Wells located within 15 feet of a driveway;
- 💧 Auto and small engine repairs;
- 💧 A large number of off-road vehicles or other gasoline engines such as ATVs motorcycles, snowmobiles, tractors or generators;
- 💧 A gravel driveway with older vehicles frequently parked there;
- 💧 A vehicle fire within the past two years; or
- 💧 A well within 300 feet of an underground or above-ground gasoline storage tank.



Tips for the Safe Management of Household Petroleum Liquids

- 💧 Buy only what you need. If you have a gallon of gas left at the end of the season, then buy that much less next season.
- 💧 Mix only what you need for two-cycle gasoline and oil mixtures.
- 💧 Most manufacturers do not recommend storing gasoline in power equipment for more than a month, so make sure to run your equipment dry.
- 💧 If you do end up with leftover fresh gas, add a stabilizer before it gets old (generally more than 30 days since purchase).
- 💧 Unmixed “old” gas can be burned in your car by diluting one part old fuel with five parts new fuel.
- 💧 Never burn brush with leftover gasoline!

- There are no cheap or easy answers for proper disposal of gasoline that has become “gummy” or contaminated with dirt and water. Check with your town to see if it sponsors a household hazardous waste pick-up day. Then you can dispose gas safely. Another option is to contact a licensed hazardous waste professional. Hazardous waste haulers will pick up contaminated gasoline from individuals, but the cost is around \$20 a gallon. Contact the Department of Environmental Protection for more information on this option.
- Store gasoline in UL-approved (red for gasoline, blue for kerosene and diesel) containers. These containers should be fitted with a spout to allow pouring without spilling.
- Store all gasoline containers in a well-ventilated shed or detached garage, away from the reach of children.
- Once a month check for leaks from fuel tanks, engines and storage containers. Little leaks and spills can add up to cause ground water contamination.

Waste Oil Management

If you change your own crankcase oil, transmission fluid, or hydraulic oil make sure you store it in a container with a secure screw top (such as empty windshield washer bottles or one-gallon milk jugs). Many local transfer stations accept waste oil, or you can take it to a service station in the Maine Oil Recycling Program (MORP). Call the Department of Environmental Protection at (207) 287-2651 to obtain a list of participating stations.

Never mix the waste gasoline/oil mixture from a two-cycle engine with other waste oil because the mixture could be explosive, especially if it is burned in a waste oil burner.

Buy or mix only what you can use. Purchasing large volumes of oil is no bargain if you cannot use up what you have.

Avoid the mess. Have your oil changed at a station that recycles used motor oil.



Your Home Heating Oil Tank Deserves Special Attention

As we all know, Maine weather takes its toll, causing ground shifts, frost heaves, rust, and general wear, all of which can affect a heating oil supply tank and its piping. Weather, corrosion, and poor maintenance can lead to spills, smells, leaks, well water contamination and lower property values.

Since so many leaks and spills are caused by the corrosion of buried piping and improperly installed outdoor tanks, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Maine's Oil and Solid Fuel Board, and the Maine Oil Dealers Association (MODA) all agreed that the state regulations needed to be changed. The new rules will keep your heating system running safely and efficiently, plus they will protect Maine's environment.

To prevent leaks caused by the corrosion of buried piping and spills caused by broken filters and tanks tipping over, Maine law now requires that all buried piping must be replaced by February 2, 2000, and all outdoor tanks not meeting the new installation standards must be upgraded by February 2, 2003.

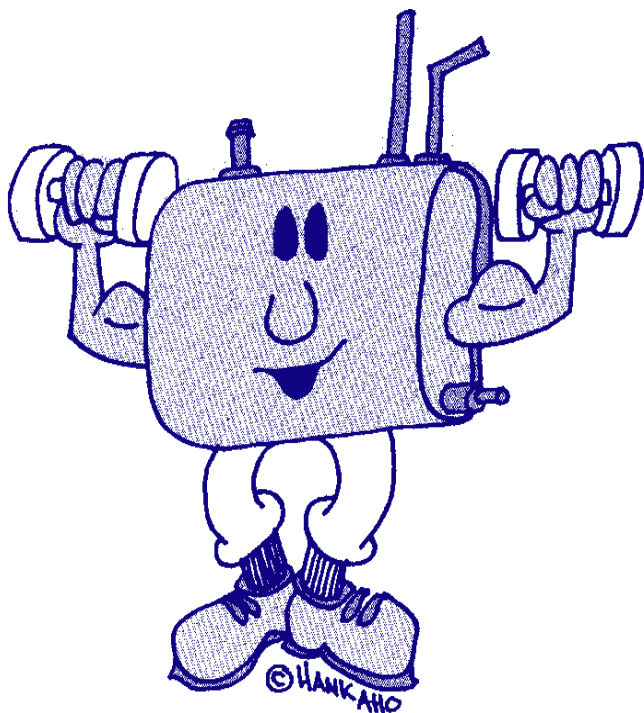
Your licensed oil heat technician can help you meet these deadlines and answer your questions about the new standards. Also, you can use the checklist on the next page to determine if your oil tank is likely to leak or cause a spill. It takes only a few minutes.

What Do I Do If I Have an Oil or Gasoline Spill?

If you do have an oil or gasoline spill at or near your property, call the Maine Department of Environmental Protection's Spill Report number to report the spill, as well as to get information and assistance on clean up.

To report oil and gasoline spills call:

1-800-482-0777

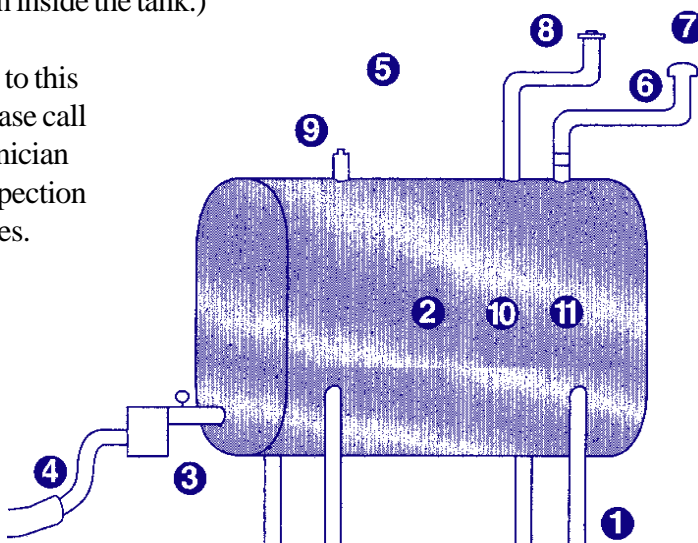


Is Your Tank in Shape?

Take this list and go look at your oil tank. But remember, look — don't touch. Answer these questions about the oil tank. Even if you can see rust or an oily patch of wetness on the tank's surface, do not touch your tank. It's best to call your licensed oil heat technician, and let a professional take care of it.

1. Are the tank legs unstable or on an uneven foundation?
2. Do you see rust, weeps, wet spots, or excessive dents on the tank's surface?
3. Are there any drips or signs of leakage around the oil filter or valves?
4. Do the oil lines run either under concrete or aboveground without being encased in a protective tubing?
5. Are there any threats of snow or ice falling on the oil tank or the filter?
6. Are there any signs of the tank's vent being clogged or blocked by ice or snow? (Screened vents are available to prevent insect nest problems.)
7. Is the overfill whistle obstructed, or silent when the tank is being filled? (It should whistle.)
8. Are there any signs of spills around the fill pipe?
9. Is the tank's gauge cracked, stuck or frozen? Do you see oil or staining around it?
10. Is your tank more than 25 years old?
11. Is your outdoor tank a dark color? (It should be painted a light color to minimize corrosive condensation inside the tank.)

If any of your answers to this checklist are YES, please call a licensed oil heat technician for a more detailed inspection and corrective measures.



Household Petroleum Liquids Worksheet

Filling out this worksheet will help you rate the threat that petroleum liquids pose to your water supply. A low risk means you are handling petroleum liquids in a safe manner. A high risk indicates you should change how you manage petroleum liquids to protect ground water and your family's health.

Home Activities	High Risk (4)	Moderate-High Risk (3)	Low-Moderate Risk (2)	Low Risk (1)
Materials Used	Multiple containers of gasoline and/or kerosene, waste oil from a year's worth of oil changes, all in various unlabeled containers	Minimize the storage of gasoline, gasoline/oil mixture and kerosene to no more than one 2.5 gallon container per fuel; no more than one oil change's worth of waste oil stored at any time	Further minimize the use of petroleum by switching to muscle-powered lawn and recreational equipment. All your oil changes are done at serviced stations that recycle used motor oil	None used
Material Disposal	Dumped in sewer, septic system, storm drain, or on the ground near a drinking water well	Put in containers for storage	Used up, given away or safely stored	Used up, given away, recycled or disposed of at local hazardous waste pick-up day
Material Storage	Stored in easily accessible area such as a basement or outside near drinking water well	Stored in a garage out of reach of children and pets; labels faded and hard to read	Stored in locked, detached shed in spill-proof U.L.-approved containers	None stored
Heating Oil Storage Tanks	Tank is more than 25 years old, outside, not protected from falling ice and snow, or has oil lines running under a concrete floor	Piping below concrete removed and installed above ground in protective tubing. Outside tank filter protected against falling ice and snow	New tank installed in basement or shed with piping running above ground and encased in protective tubing	None used or stored

